

## **Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) and Life Long Learning (LLL) - Policy Recommendations and Reflections**

A result of trans-national cooperation - Bulgaria, Denmark, Greece and Romania

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# Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) and Life Long Learning (LLL) - Policy Recommendations and Reflections

**A result of trans-national cooperation – Bulgaria, Denmark,  
Greece and Romania**



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ACTION: "Mutual Learning Activities for  
Increase of Human Capital Investment"



Community Programme "PROGRESS" - Follow up and Dissemination Activities to the  
Mutual Learning Programme of the European Employment Strategy

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The present study was implemented in the framework of an Action of the **Community Programme “PROGRESS”** by the title: **“Mutual Learning Activities for Increase of Human Capital Investment”**.

The study entails information from recent national reports from Bulgaria, Denmark, Greece and Romania regarding their national continuing vocational training systems. The national reports highlighted the strong and weak points of each system, along with good practices and policy recommendations for their improvement, giving emphasis on the increase of citizens' participation. The national reports were based on qualitative approaches and specifically on SWOT analysis, focus groups and national workshops.

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## Introduction

The present study was implemented in the framework of the Action “Mutual Learning Activities for Increase of Human Capital Investment” which is included in the Community Program Progress. The aim of the Action was to develop mutual learning activities in order to strengthen the investment in human capital in Greece, Bulgaria and Romania which are three of the member states that hold the lowest participation rates in lifelong learning.

This was attempted to be achieved through the analysis of the implemented policies in life long learning in each participant country and the detection of the crucial points, along with the know how transfer from Denmark that holds one of the highest rates as regards lifelong learning participation.

In order to specify the width and the boundaries of the each national life long learning system it was necessary to narrow our field of interest within Continuing Vocational Training.

Particularly, the analysis was focused on the following sub areas:

1. Continuing Vocational Training Policies.
2. Financing schemes for the participation of citizens in Continuing Vocational Training.
3. National Studies for the characteristics of the participants in Continuing Vocational Training.
4. Motives/incentives and counterincentives for participation.
5. «Good Practices».
6. The contribution of the organizations that implement Continuing Vocational Training.
7. The role of the trainer/educator.
8. Vulnerable social groups.
9. Alternative training schemes (distant training, mixed/combined systems)
10. The contribution and the role of new technologies (e-learning).
11. Connection of Continuing Vocational Training with the European Employment strategy in a national level.

## 12. Connection of Continuing Vocational Training with the labour market in a national level.

Basically through the comparative analysis of continuing vocational training systems in the participant countries and by valorising other European good practices we concluded to the following policy recommendations and reflections for improving the implemented strategies.

Different policy approaches and choices are being applied in each member state regarding their national systems of continuing vocational training which implies that there is a need for deeper understanding of the conditions for successful policy implementation.

Firstly we will briefly present the present situation regarding each national continuing vocational training system along with some reflections and basic recommendations. Secondly the European policy on Life Long Learning and the Lisbon goals are presented.

Lastly a critical assessment and some policy recommendations regarding the European Employment Strategy (EES) and LLL are presented.

It should be noted that through this document it is highlighted that there are no magic solutions regarding each countries situation in LLL but we present some policy recommendations that might be useful to every system if they are further elaborated.

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## 1. Summary: general recommendations

Basically, of course, any system and stakeholder in LLL and CVT should celebrate important and well known features in adult education – meaning that institutions, providers etc. should actively work on and develop their professionalism within:

- To optimal extent involving all stakeholders in participatory processes (for instance via the method of 'future work shops' – bottom up processes, during which criticism, utopian horizons and reality elements are brought forward, reflected upon and elaborated in decision processes)
- Identifying priorities and focus points
- Realise the balance between the complexity of the challenge and the resources needed
- Establish a well reflected complex of 'before' – 'during' – 'after' in learning processes. *Before*: solid needs analysis; preconditions and situation of the participants; etc. *During*: adequate learning arena; study material; professional trainers – with knowledge of subject matter plus teaching methodology; etc. *After*: follow up and implementation in the workplace; solid evaluation of learning outcome; improvement of participants/workers' autonomy in job performance, in accordance with newly acquired skills; etc.
- What role should the stakeholders play (state, civil society, market – professionals, workers, employers, unions, associations, NGOs etc.)? What is the concrete situation in the national context? What interplay is desirable and possible? Learning is much more than curricula and teaching methods – the considerations just mentioned are among decisive macro factors for successful LLL and CVT participation and outcome
- Finding adequate pedagogics and teaching methods for the concrete target group
- Basing activities on needs analysis – that curricula reflects articulated needs and interests of participants and enterprises etc., not being standard supplies and matrixes, in which the hidden



quality criteria is the optimal convenience and comfort of the provider, not the participant

- Experimenting with participatory methods, appropriate to the specific situation
- Making sure that the training concepts, aims and goals are practical and concrete – we are not talking just about ‘schooling’ – the learning arena is much more diversified, for instance workplace learning is of great importance
- Legislation, policies and practises should optimise easy access for potential participants
- Making sure that there are no extra expenditures for the participants (fees, transport costs, loss of wages and salaries, etc.)
- The learning arena should represent a secure environment and atmosphere, in which the participants can feel confident and at home
- Low skilled potential participants will often suffer from a lack of basic skills – which will often be hidden and kept as their personal secret; they will often feel embarrassed as grown up and mature people to have this deficit revealed, due to life history experiences of being stigmatised and oppressed, related to their socio-cultural belonging and profile. They will therefore often develop defence reactions towards schooling and education; institutions and ‘culture’ linked to this aspect of society is seen through a dichotomy of dividing the world into ‘them’ (the others, the meritocracy, the privileged, the arrogant etc.) and ‘us’ (the underprivileged, the ordinary people etc.)
- The SMEs often need support – they have no professional departments for strategic planning, including Human Resources development (HR), CVT, lean organisation etc. Professional stakeholders, providers, institutions should support them by providing this infrastructure for qualification needs analyses, advanced work organisation, CVT and LLL possibilities etc. The public authorities should subsidise these actions, since it will be of mutual benefit for all parties in society

- Programmes for job-rotation and paid educational leave should be established in combination with each other – i.e. for example 10 workers from a company could join CVT in accordance with above principles. They could be replaced temporarily by 10 unemployed persons, which have been trained for this replacement according to active labour market policies for unemployed. They should as unemployed be offered fully financed (including living costs) CVT and LLL schemes instead of passive social benefits. After a period of time this will lead to a higher level of qualifications in the company and in the workforce in general
- The adult trainers and teachers should be actively involved in research and development projects (R&D) together with universities and other research institutions. They should also recurrently participate in continuing education for their own skills renewal and development, both when it comes to the subject matter they teach – and when it comes to adult education pedagogics and didactics (sometimes referred to as ‘andragogy’). They should somehow develop a professional profile characterised by sensitivity towards the ‘thematic universe’ of the participants; and they should of course have knowledge of a wide variety of methods and approaches. This ‘training the trainers’ concept should be developed together with and closely linked to active researchers within LLL
- Counselling centres with a highly professional staff should be established in local communities – to communicate proper options for the individual potential participant, and to disseminate these opportunities in a local context, in which people can feel safe and secure
- These centres – in collaboration with other stakeholders – could also organise and implement outreach activities in local environments, like for instance workplaces, housing areas, leisure time activities, sports associations etc.
- In general all information activities should take place in ‘natural settings’, i.e. environments and forms that are not socio-culturally unfamiliar to potential participants

- Alongside with this goes the identification and activation of volunteer peers, who would like to function as role models and good examples in various information and outreach activities
- A valuable initiative would be to establish educative channels on national TV and other media; visualised information and motivation efforts are known to have a certain popularity among the otherwise sceptical target groups
- Of utter importance are systematised and acknowledged activities regarding clarification and assessment of the target groups' prior/real competences. Typically, they have a lot of informal skills and practical knowledge. To have this learning formally recognised would no doubt create strong incentives for the formally low skilled people to add some more training etc., in order for them to obtain a formal diploma etc. and an official recognition of already acquired skills – with a minimum of time spent in schooling and training
- Also, the ethos and practice of compulsory, primary/grammar school is of great importance. Basic school is where attitudes towards education and learning are first established. It is decisive whether 'school' and 'learning' represents positive experiences for children and young people, based on inclusive, participatory approaches, equality between social and ethnic groups and genders, respect between students and teachers, based on a vision of symmetric relations, modern learning theories and didactical anchoring, including a close collaboration between parents and school. This is relevant because of the fact that many of the psychological barriers against participation of adults in CVT and LLL can be related to problematic experiences from compulsory school.

## **2. Bulgaria: the CVT-situation, reflections and recommendations**

According to the Bulgarian national report on continuing vocational training system there are some *strong points* in the Bulgarian situation for the moment. It is stated in the report, that in the past the political situation regarding CVT was well organised and comprehensive. Unfortunately, this was strongly harmed during post-communism transition and the contemporary financial crisis has worsened the situation. Despite this, there has recently been efforts to 'modernize' and 'Europeanize' the CVT system: this means that elements of market approach and free competition have been introduced, and also there has been made space for commercial, private enterprise players etc. These are attempts to harmonize with EU standards. Further strong elements are pointed out: that for the moment the CVT providers are independent, private enterprises – but they are well regulated by the government. According to the report, they are oriented towards the concrete needs of the labour market; this implies that they are demand-, and not supply-oriented.

The selection mechanisms of the participants have now been democratized – and also the participants have a "growing market motivation". Furthermore, a comprehensive information system has been developed, based on private providers' "own commercial purposes".

This leaves the impression that there is a certain fascination of the present market orientation of CVT arrangements in Bulgaria. Probably this is due to a low confidence in state activities and regulations, based on experiences from the political situation in the past. In the meantime it is not fully explained how, for instance, an information system based on private providers' "own commercial purposes" can make sure that societal, general needs for Life Long Learning (LLL) and CVT can be met. Also, one might claim that a "growing market motivation" among (potential) participants runs a risk of being short-sighted and narrow, tied

to the concrete, present employability situation. But in a dynamic, ever changing world with a globalised economy and international division of labour, there should be some strategic thinking about scenarios that exceed the present moment.

The Bulgarian national report is pointing to some other *outstanding problems* in the present Bulgarian CVT situation. There are too few resources compared to the amount of ideas, strategies and policies, it is said. This leaves behind the impression that there might be much talk, and less action. This is not specific for Bulgaria; unfortunately, it is not an unfamiliar situation in most of Europe, when it comes to LLL and CVT.

Also, there are difficulties connected with the economic structure: the (many) small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) have a restricted, traditional approach to development. They focus on the material, technological development – and have less focus on development of work organisation and human resources, without which potentials for productivity and full exploitation of technological development cannot be realised. A productive perspective would be to combine the two types of development in a well planned and implemented, smart way.

The report also points to the fact that the Bulgarian employers do not finance CVT adequately. This is said to be due to a certain short-sightedness of the individual entrepreneur; but the question is which stakeholder could guarantee long term strategies for competitiveness by implementation of LLL and CVT? In other countries, for instance in Scandinavia, the state functions as 'the total capitalist' – meaning that it provides the general, fundamental infrastructure for a competitive capitalistic economy (laws, roads, ports, skills and qualifications etc.). But it seems as if in the Bulgarian present situation there is no such lean but strong state structure that the civil society would trust to take on this role. Another important point is that in the Bulgarian situation there is an absence of validation structures. We do know from surveys and experiences in for instance Scandinavia that this is of great importance to (potential) participants. Especially the low skilled workers are sceptical towards any educational activity that is not undoubtedly leading to a

concrete improvement of their social life situation: job security, raise of salaries and wages etc. They want material proof that this effort (to participate) is worth it – and a formal paper in their hands that validates their acquired skills would no doubt function as that kind of a ‘proof’.

Nevertheless there are potentials for an improvement of the CVT situation in Bulgaria. Specifically one could mention that a strong and comprehensive dialogue with all stakeholders should be initiated - especially with the SMEs, given the fact that most potential participants are employed in SMEs for the moment.

When it comes to necessary initiatives of a legislative and organisational nature these should sensitively reflect the concrete situation of Bulgaria – and not mirror abstract ideas from Western Europe. The present social and mental structure in Bulgaria (and for that matter any country) cannot be seen separate from historical experiences, traditions etc. (the past lives on inside the present). Therefore, a strong effort to create partnerships between all stakeholders should be made; this could bring forward as many voices as possible, in order to fortify democracy and solidity of discussions and decisions, bringing about maximal legitimacy. Of course, among the sources for these discussions should be also inspiration from outside (other EU member states etc.). But this inspiration should be critically inspected and reflected, and then consciously adapted to the Bulgarian situation.

Lastly, it is also pointed out that it would probably be productive to reflect further on the following points. That there should be established a new interplay between ‘state’, ‘civil society’ and ‘market’. This might be fruitful, and hopefully imply a conceptualisation of a modernised, reformed, non-bureaucratic lean ‘state’ that could supervise activities for the general good. This should be a ‘public service’ state, which regulates – but at the same time responds to the needs of the people and the market. This could regulate and subordinate elements of market forces that might be in it only for the profit, and not for the short and long term needs of society. (Society is more than state; society includes all stakeholders: workers, companies and enterprises, public and private providers,

professionals/trainers, researchers, NGOs, civil associations, politicians on all levels etc. etc.). As mentioned, partnerships between all stakeholders should be established, for the benefit of dialogue and exchange of positions and approaches. This could inform decision makers about which way Bulgaria wants to head in these matters.

In Denmark the majority of stakeholders support the idea that when it comes to education and learning (LLL and CVT included) it is a national, general, public service task to bring about competitiveness of the country. Because – for good reasons – the main target of private enterprise is to maximise own profit and benefits; not to service the common good. This is the very logic of market economy; but in most cases we are better off seeing 'market' as our servant and not as our master.

Of course this is easier said than done: it is well known that we have a different social history in Scandinavia, with our long term democracy, social welfare state, wealth, taxation, new public management, highly organised labour market, tripartite collaboration, flexicurity, strong civil society, etc. But it can probably serve as a source for inspiration.

Also, the ethos and practice of compulsory, primary/grammar school is of great importance. Basic school is where attitudes towards education and learning is first established. It is decisive whether 'school' and 'learning' represents positive experiences for children and young people, based on inclusive, participatory approaches, equality between social and ethnic groups and genders, respect between students and teachers, based on a vision of symmetric relations, modern learning theories and didactical anchoring, including a close collaboration between parents and school.

### **3. Denmark – the CVT situation, reflections and recommendations**

In order to better understand the crucial points of the Danish CVT system it is important to present the structure of the *LLL system in Denmark*.

The *pre-school* voluntarily sector is attended by kids, 1/2 - 6 years of age. It consists of the following institutions: day-care, which are either public and institutionalised or private, the latter nursing the kids in private homes, which are accredited and inspected by the authorities. This is for children between 1/2 year and 3 years of age. Next step are Kindergarten, which are public (municipal) institutions, running semi-organised, 'play-and-learning' programmes for children between 3 and 5 years of age. Finally, at grammar schools there are pre-school activities; introducing small elements of literacy and numeracy programmes for children 6 years of age.

Approximately 90% of all Danish children attend these institutions and programmes; this is due to the fact that in Denmark the species of 'housewives' has disappeared: about 95% of all married women with small kids are wage earners on the labour market. So are often the grandmothers/grandparents – and besides this fact a lot of young families find that their kids are better off with institutionalised professional care and social interaction with kids of their own age – for stimulation of language, learning, development of social competences, maturity etc.

The staff in these institutions is primarily professionals with bachelor degrees in pedagogics and child care from university colleges. The institutions are run and supervised by the municipalities. They are financed partly by the municipality, partly by the parents.

The *compulsory grammar school* is for all children 7 – 15 years of age. It consists of primary and secondary schools. In Denmark these two are integrated: we have a unity school for all children until 9<sup>th</sup> class. There is no division of the children until they leave compulsory school. All kinds of



subjects are taught. From 3<sup>rd</sup> class foreign languages are taught. From 1st – 9th class the school is compulsory (10th class is voluntarily).

All of the offers of grammar school are totally free of charge, financed by the municipalities, which are again supported/subsidised by state money (exceptions might be voluntarily excursions, summer camps etc., for which the parents might have to pay a fee). The compulsory school has competent, professional, well educated teachers, trained at university colleges (in a 4 year dual programme, consisting of combined elements of theory and practise in real settings). The teachers have in principle an access to recurrent training schemes (paid educational leave), ranging from short updating courses to two years part time master programmes at state universities (we do not have private universities in Denmark). 20% of the expenses are self-financed, in most cases this means that it is generally agreed between the teachers' trade union and the employers organisation (the Danish Association of Municipalities) that the employer (i.e. the municipality) will pay. The problem is for the moment that the municipalities have very limited resources.

Next are the upper secondary schools *and programmes* for young people, 16 – 19/20 years of age. These programmes consist of: A) the general, liberal 'gymnasium' (high school), which prepares the young people for further studies. The programme lasts for 3 years, and is attended by approximately 40% of a cohort. B) The vocational schools and training system; it is a dual system, i.e. it is combining theoretical (in school) and practical (in real work places) elements preparing for work and (semi)professions- i.e. craftsmen, health, office and service workers etc. The students are traditionally called 'apprentices', having a contract of 4 years with the employer. They are being paid a small salary, regulated by agreements between the trade unions and the employers' organisations. This system is attended by approximately another 40 % of a cohort.

The remaining 20% are early school leavers or drop-outs, who are later on in life performing non- or low-skilled jobs. Approximately 1/3 of the Danish work force is without any formal, recognised skills. This group of

low-skilled people is each year supplemented by about 22% of a youth cohort, who do not get any formal competency what so ever. They are either drop-outs from vocational schools or from general gymnasium; or they finish gymnasium, pass their exams, but with so minimal results that it will not allow them access to further studies. There is an element of 'social inheritance' in this, since the group in question mainly consists of young people in whose family background there is no tradition of training, education or studies.

We have a sector of *universities and university colleges*, which are also part of the LLL and (to some extent) the CVT system in Denmark. The universities in Denmark offer bachelor-, extended masters- and PhD-degrees; this is the so-called 3+2+3 model, following the EU Bologna-process, which aims at harmonising European training and education systems. This is in order to obtain flexibility, free transfer of merits, diplomas, labour etc.

The university colleges offer profession bachelors degrees, which are typically obtained after 4 years of studying and training. It is in most cases a dual system, combining theoretical studies and practise in terms of internships in real work places. This is how nurses, kindergarten and primary/secondary school teachers, social workers etc. are educated and trained.

In this sector there are also numerous CVT part time programmes for adults. At universities the participants can obtain master degrees. At the university colleges they can obtain diplomas. Most young full time students will enter higher education when they are around the age of 20 – but adults in part time programmes are typically 35-40 years of age, performing full time jobs simultaneously. The programmes are 80% financed by the state, 20% is self financed; but in many cases the employer will pay the fee. In return the employee puts in leisure time. This way both parties are putting in resources – for mutual benefit. The adult participant can receive adult education grants from the state, which – in case the employer and the trade union representative have agreed

upon this – the employer can keep for himself provided that he pays the employee full salary also when participating in life long learning activities during work hours.

Besides this there is a specific *Adult and continuing education sector*, consisting of 3 state supported and subsidized subsectors:

A) *the continuing vocational training sector*. As just mentioned there are vocationally oriented part time programmes at universities and university colleges; but also vocational training centres, technical and commercial schools, labour market training centres etc. are having (part time) programmes for adults. The purpose of this subsector is to provide the participants with up-dated professional skills; if they pass the exams, they will obtain fully recognised diplomas.

B) *the general, liberal 'peoples enlightenment' sector*. We are here talking about folk high schools, day folk high schools, evening classes, 'peoples university' etc. These institutions provide personal and citizen development on a liberal basis; there are no exams and diplomas. It is a more than 150 years old tradition in Denmark, not found many other places than in Scandinavia.

C) *the formal competencies for 'second chancers'*, preparing for further studies. FVU: providing basic skills in numeracy and literacy. AVU: providing skills for adults, equivalent to exams from grammar school – 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> class. HF: preparing for higher education, equivalent to 'gymnasium' exams.

There is also a rather small *private sector*; this is mostly short vocationally and job oriented courses, provided by consultancies, financed by the employers or attendances themselves.

### **Some strong points of Danish LLL and CVT**

Some of the strong points of the Danish Life Long Learning and Continuing Vocational Training system are the following.

*The participatory, tripartite system*, which is based on a highly organized labour market and social partners interaction. More than 80% of the Danish workers are organized in trade unions; most of the employers are organized as well, especially the bigger companies.

The flexible social organization, the so called *flexicurity* system. This means that the companies have no social, health or pension obligations towards the workers. The workers can be sacked with short notice. This is due to the fact that the Danish state (i.e. of course the tax payers) will pay social benefits and offer education etc. So: the workers are paid a high gross salary – but will hand half of it over to the tax office; in return there is free education, social benefits, hospitals, doctors etc.

There is a system of *recognition of prior learning*; it promotes participation of practically oriented, but not formally educated workers. It is not yet fully implemented in Denmark, but it does work with what is called ‘adult apprentices’: if you have worked for many years as for instance a handy man in a garage you can have your practically acquired skills as a car mechanic assessed and then recognised; if you put some months of schooling on top of this your ‘real competence’ – as it is called – you can obtain a full formally recognised diploma as a skilled car mechanic. The state will subsidize this training period financially.

So: there are rather *comprehensive state financed training schemes* and support for adult participants – and also well organized schools and systems, with modern equipment and qualified trainers, both in terms of subject matter and pedagogical skills with special regards towards training of adults.

LLL and CVT have in general a *high reputation* in Denmark, due to our social history, long term democratic tradition, many civil associations, NGOs etc. This is also why a political majority across party borders support the strong focus on the importance of LLL and CVT. Also, there is a strong focus on *guidance and counselling*, for instance outreach activities for the not so motivated target groups.

The *management* of daily as well as development activities is run rather professionally and in a non-bureaucratic way; the social partners are integrated in this on local, regional as well as national level.

As mentioned above there is a rather well developed system of *recognition of prior learning* (including informal and non-formal learning) plus a parallel system from bottom to top for 'second chancers' adults.

### **Some 'weak' points of and challenges for Danish LLL and CVT**

There are also, of course, some elements of the Danish Life Long Learning and Continuing Vocational Training system that are not so strong:

The participation rate is sub-optimal among the most needy groups: low skilled workers, immigrants, etc. Almost 1/3 of the Danish workforce is without formal schooling, so this fact is not optimal.

In recent years, state subsidises have been cut down; also, it is difficult for unemployed adults to live on adult education grants, when they have to retrain.

The many SMEs do not seem to have a strategic planning of competence building among their workers; they tend to follow a 'hire and fire' strategy. This is especially important since almost 2/3 of the workforce is employed in SMEs.

The low skilled workers themselves do not find long term investments in their own education desirable – they hope to be able to find unskilled (and in Denmark rather well paid) jobs through out their entire work life.

The structure of the 'system' is too complex; it is actually not a coherent system, but it consists of historically grown different institutions and legislative/administrative frameworks under several ministries (education, labour, culture etc.). For among other things this reason there are deficits in transparency and coherence for potential users and other stakeholders.

There are barriers of different kinds: as mentioned there are rather strong motivational problems among low skilled adults; there are significant deficits in strategic planning of skills development in SMEs; and other barriers.

There are difficulties in keeping a proper balance between 'economic' (vocationally and professionally oriented learning activities), 'social' (citizenship and community oriented learning activities) and 'personal' (existentially, family, individuality oriented learning activities) aims and goals for LLL participants. This is reflected in legislation, financing,

discourses, ideologies etc. – and this means that our tradition for general, liberal adult education ('peoples enlightenment') is under pressure.

## 4. Greece – the CVT situation, reflections and recommendations

When it comes to **policies**, there is a reliable system of CVT in Greece, the national report points out. The system contains specifications of demands on providers/educational bodies, and also on conditions regarding the training offers and courses, which are provided. The efforts made for national accreditation has resulted in providers (VTCs), which have an institutionalised quality profile; this means that they are meeting quality demands in infrastructure and staff requirements.

There is evidence that the participating trainees are satisfied with the courses. Still, the report points out, there is a margin for increased participation. Also, it is mentioned, that a further systematised and standardized certification would serve as an element of improvement. This should be seen in relation to the need for a National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF).

Also, there is a need for 'optimum coordination' of training actions. The system that is supposed to do it (ESSEEKA) is established, but it is delayed in implementation. The report claims that it is high time to activate it. The same goes for a coordination of training actions with counselling – and for integrating 'social partners, training and research bodies' in the system.

About the **financing** it is said that there is already a target group differentiated financing system or scheme, but that it is mostly initiated by EU funding, and that there has been some inadequate bureaucratic problems and dysfunctions in the system. This has had negative impact on the motivation of (potential) trainees. A national financing system for continuing training actions is needed.

For a Scandinavian it is a bit surprising to realise this profound confidence in 'state' activism and standardized system solutions – without asking which type of 'state', we are talking about: a responsive state? A standard supply state? With a proper modernised, lean, non-bureaucratic state in a

strong democracy with a blended economy one can balance a 'state modified market' and a 'market modified state' – which, according to Scandinavian experiences, seem to be the most productive arrangement for a well functioning LLL and CVT.

The situation concerning **research** in LLL and CVT in Greece is a bit precarious. In 2007, for instance, useful statistics about motivations and barriers towards 'informal training courses' were provided. But in general, there has been minimal academic focus on adult education, which has resulted in a situation, in which there is not much valid information on features, needs, incentives, attitudes, views and barriers etc. of adult (potential) trainees. In some cases this has meant that new target groups (for instance unemployed women with low level of formal education) were met with standard approaches – failing optimal success for this reason. So there is a strong need for a systematised, well financed scientific research (R&D), implying also new (qualitative) methodologies – I would add, from a Scandinavian point of view. We do not just need to know 'that' (so and so many participate or do not participate, for instance) – we also want to know 'why'; because we need this solid foundation in order to take proper actions and initiatives. Methodologically we do not only need proper statistics, we also need for instance narrative interviews (one approach among many is FANI-type, Hollway/Jefferson, 2000) – we need the voice of the potential participants themselves to fully understand the complexity of the challenge. If we do this we can produce and detect useful, differentiated socio-cultural information and knowledge, enabling us to target specific groups more sensitively towards their 'thematic universe' (phrase by Brazilian adult educator and thinker Paulo Freire).

Lastly, about the research situation, the report proposes that knowledge based organisations and institutions should function as advisors of the state – and that this should be coordinated and bolstered by the establishment of a research body at national level.

When it comes to the **participation** theme, the report points to incentives that could increase participation rates. Firstly there should be a certification of acquired skills. And, linked to this, an identification of



vocational profiles is necessary. The financing should be proper and there should be a quality assurance of the provision.

Corresponding with above mentioned incentives, the report has also identified prevailing counter-incentives: that there is a lack of comprehensive, adequate and sufficient information; that there is a low linkage of LLL and CVT to employment and labour market; that there is a lack of target specificity in the subject matter provided; that there is a lack of 'visitation' (i.e. counselling that mediates between individual potential participants and the programmes and activities that they specifically need). Furthermore, it is counterproductive that there is a weak strategic thinking in the business sector (SMEs) – and that the financing schemes are not sufficient.

In general there is a strong need for more research to establish solid, valid knowledge about these matters. When it comes to identified potentials and barriers the results presented in the Greek report are compatible with research results from Scandinavia. The most important point, when it comes to LLL and CVT for low skilled workers, is that they do not – for good reasons – possess a 'natural grown' motivation for participation. Therefore, to meet their socio-cultural profile and thus motivational structure, one should act according to a detailed knowledge of the specific challenges regarding this target group. Keywords of their symbolic relationship with 'education and learning' is that it should be: A) *instrumental*, which means that it should lead to an immediate, concrete, 'material' gratification, for instance a (better) job (security), a higher salary, better work conditions etc. B) it should be *mimetic*, meaning that the learning arena, the atmosphere, the surroundings, colleagues, trainers etc. should not be too different from their own life history and socio-cultural profile. Finally, it should be C) *minimalistic*: the aims and goals of the learning process should not be to change their values, identities and roles – they do not fancy 'permanent change' and 'constant shaping and reshaping of one's own identity', 'career planning in a lifelong learning perspective' and 'innovative entrepreneurship' etc. – they want to live secure lives rooted in semi-traditional patterns. For many reasons – out of

respect, and to reach practical results etc.- they should be met with adequate challenges, and not with meritocratic ethnocentric approaches.

A part of the method behind the Greek national report was – as for the other national reports as well - to identify '**best practises**' in the present situation. Firstly, the concept of 'best practise' is defined: it is an activity, which is innovative and original; has results and impacts; can be repeated; meets relevant targets, and has a participation from the intended beneficiaries.

For the practical dissemination of this 'best practise' an organisation or institution should be established that could record and disseminate models of best practise for others to adopt, adjust and improve. The feed-back should be collected and worked on by the body mentioned.

Here, again it seems - seen from a Scandinavian point of view – as if there is a strong belief in centralised concepts. One could suggest that also NGOs, volunteer organisations, civil society associations etc. might be of relevance in this matter.

There is a need for an **implementing body** – although the situation has improved significantly during the last decade. This is due to coordinated actions, which has resulted in certification and monitoring, and to a (systematised) establishment of vocational training centres of top class quality. Also, there has been productive legislative interventions regarding staff qualification profiles, planning, monitoring, and evaluation etc. But still, it is debated whether this could be of a more continuous character? If it could get a firmer academic basis and thus lead to a continuous qualification improvement of staff etc.?

Regarding the **instructors**, the initiative and action 'instructing the instructors' (2002-2007) represents a big jump forward. This is witnessed by focus groups and trainees in the survey that lead to this Greek national report. But despite of this, still there is a need for continuity, systematic approaches, credit transfer and follow-up actions etc.

When it comes to **vulnerable social groups**, there are NGOs and collective bodies involved in initiatives. The report points out that there is a potential for improvement of participation rate for this specific target group, if providers link content, aims and goals to employment strategies. Also, potential participants should be informed adequately, i.e. in a way that is compatible with the specific needs of the target group in question. Relevant questions to ask oneself as a provider would be – among others: what language is the mother tongue of the specific group? What is their level of literacy? Etc.

The report also presents some ideas about **alternative educational structures**. New initiatives, such as Open University, or distance and blended learning experiences among professionals, also in the adult education sector, can increasingly contribute to participation for specific groups. For instance those living in remote areas, or low skilled workers, or women with family etc. But we know – also from Scandinavian research results - that especially the target groups mentioned (let us call them the 'traditionalists', without meaning to stigmatise anyone) prefer face-to-face courses. This is understandable - and should be respected, both for pragmatic and ethical reasons - because these groups are more 'traditional and collective' oriented than 'modern and individualised'; they want and need the security of challenging themselves in peer groups, with friends and families around them – and not as lone rangers fighting their own constraints in a modern therapeutic coaching way. They prefer 'stability' to 'change' in their lives – which, of course, is not very compatible with late modern discourses of lifelong learning etc. Furthermore, there is some evidence that - eventually – *if* they participate in LLL and CVT they do it to some extent in order to 'catch up'! This means that they regret having failed schooling in the first round. So now that they finally found the possibility, courage and maturity to return they want to be sure that they reach the attracted results: solid knowledge and skills the way it was conceived 30 years ago when they left school (early). This implies that they want to be *taught*. They grew up with the idea that the only way you learn is when someone superior teach you something - mostly in terms of scientific disciplines. They are for good reasons not

inclined to trust for instance modern participatory learning theories that pay homage to concepts as 'self directed learning', 'experiential learning' etc. Concepts based on methods like for instance group work, projects, discussions etc. They want the teacher to respect them, but at the same time he should represent an authority that they can rely on. Only in this way they find it worthwhile to overcome all the practical, economical, psychological and emotional barriers connected with returning to school. It is an interesting psycho-dynamic complex: somehow they want the whole 'culture' around 'school'/adult education to replicate what they did not manage to cope with in childhood – but at the same time they want, of course, to be respected as grown up, mature people with some experience and knowledge of their own. There seems to be a rather ambivalent approach of these target groups to LLL and CVT.

Is **e-learning** an option, the report asks? In general, electronic communication services are rapidly penetrating Greece. But for underprivileged and vulnerable groups to a much lesser degree than for middle class people. The underprivileged groups do not to the same extent have the access to for instance internet. Maybe they cannot afford it, and they might also be hesitant towards it – among other things because they do not in general believe very much in their own learning abilities.

But still further experiments and experiences on for instance 'blended learning' could be implemented, collected and reflected. This could take place in for instance publicly financed, local community houses, with a proper equipment of computers, net connections, instructors etc.

How does CVT in Greece correspond with **EU and national employment strategies**? The Greek membership of EU has contributed to the development of a reliable CVT system, and to an increase of financing. But there is still a difficulty in adapting LLL and CVT to the national circumstances and preconditions: there is a lack of tradition for adult education (especially outside formal training), and it is therefore proposed in the report that there should be "actions whose clear objective is to

develop more favourable collective mentalities and attitudes towards adult education...” . - No offence, but: seen from the point of view of Scandinavian adult education this might be a tricky proposal. One might ask if it is compatible with the whole ethos and history of adult education and enlightenment to try, from a centralised standpoint, to “develop more favourable collective mentalities and attitudes” towards an idea or a programme that is centrally conceived - in Brussels and/or Athens, by politicians and civil servants, belonging to post-modern global and cosmopolitan meritocracy, without any daily contact with the objects of these “actions”? The whole idea of adult education is to develop active, reflected and informed human subjects, not to pose own mentalities on passive objects!

The Greek CVT system and the **national labour market**: it is stated in the report that in Greece there are inadequacies in linking labour supply and labour demand. For this reason – among other things - it is important for CVT strategies to know whether unemployment is due to a lack of qualifications – or to a lack of investments? Here we could have in mind that in education economy an interesting point has been launched: in most theoretical traditions the idea is that ‘business structures call for specific qualification structures’ – for instance that advanced industrial structures and implementation of new technology call for (new) vocational as well as general and personal qualifications in the workforce. But it can also be seen the other way around: a well, comprehensive qualification structure in the workforce and population in general can call for new business structures, i.e. attract investments; and thus create new jobs for those with these attractive ‘surplus’ qualifications. For instance, if a country trains more chemical engineers than they need for the moment, it might be attractive for multinational medical companies to invest and settle down in this country or region, because they can find available the qualified staff they need.

As already pointed out it is likely to be the case that if there is no job waiting at the end of the training tunnel for the low skilled worker he is not very interested in and motivated for participation in LLL and CVT. This is due to the *instrumentalism* mentioned previously; so also this issue is

extremely important when we discuss motivation and increased participation: educational actions should be combined with the prospect of a job afterwards. So a close connection between national labour market, qualification profiles framework and CVT/LLL is of great importance, when it comes to an increase of participation rates.

In the report the question is raised, how it is possible to **match CVT and participants?** It is said that we have – in a more systematic and scientific way – to explore educational needs. The question is how we do this? Is it by means of deduction, i.e. we analyse the business structure, derive or deduct qualification needs from this analysis, compare this ‘need’ with the existing qualification profile of the workforce; and out comes a deficit, a gap – which we fill by the means of LLL and CVT? But what does ‘need’ mean? Are qualifications always something workers lack – or something that they have, but which are not made usable in the prevailing work organization? Maybe a maximised ‘surplus’ thinking is strategically better, cf. previously about education economy. But on the other hand this does not match well with what is also said earlier about the instrumentalism of the workers’ motivational profile etc. There is constantly a dynamic relationship between long term and short term thinking and actions, among all stakeholders.

Furthermore, information and matching/‘visitation’ procedures should be improved. We need a link of counselling between the enterprises (especially the SMEs) and the workers, i.e. the potential participants of LLL and CVT.

Also, courses should be monitored, in accordance with valid knowledge about the complex issue of LLL and CVT. The providers should be inspired to integrate relevant practical, *mimetic* (cf. previously) elements with a perspective of job finding – and trainers should be (made) capable of embodying this.

A dual system, which integrates theoretical, practical and on-the-job training elements, i.e. internships and the like, should be promoted. This should be combined with acknowledgement of prior informal and/or non-formal learning etc. Such an initiative would be attractive to a lot of workers without formally recognised skills. In Denmark we talk about

'adult apprentices', who can acquire a full range of skills and a diploma investing less time – provided that they have already a relevant and solid practical experience.

## 5. Romania – the CVT situation, reflections and recommendations

In the Romanian national report some **strong points** of their CVT system is pointed out.

It is said that there is a consistent legislation, which includes quality assurance, accreditation of providers and assessment of participants' outcome. There is also an established infrastructure for involvement of stakeholders: tripartite body, social partners, sector committees etc.

But it is also said that in practise there are some **weak points**. There are bureaucratic aspects and implementation difficulties, and in practice the involvement of stakeholders is insufficient. Also, the institutional capacities are limited, and in general there is a need for the legislative and institutional frameworks to be consolidated and valorised.

The **financing system** gets in principle its resources from a) government, b) private business and c) special schemes (EU/European Social Fund - ESF). Furthermore, the set up of a 'training fund' has been debated, but it has so far been rejected by the social partners. The Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), which is an important source for funding of CVT, is not used by the companies; in the report, it is said to be too bureaucratic. EU-money is offered/posed. But there is a lack of capacity to develop and manage the financial resources for CVT. There is a poor cooperation between the stakeholders – and the control mechanisms are only focused on formal aspects.

When it comes to the level of **knowledge about the participants** the report points out that to some extent data are unreliable and insufficient. The in-formal and non-formal learning is not registered. For this reason it is stated that more research and systematic surveys are needed. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the participation rate is too low. This is – among other factors - due to the following obstacles: there is an insufficient awareness of the importance of CVT and LLL among all stakeholders. Also, there is a lack of financial resources. The access is difficult, for geographical reasons, and because of a lack of flexibility in the system and of basic skills among potential participants. Furthermore,



the information and counselling measures are insufficient. There is a lack of professional culture around LLL and CVT and its stakeholders. The advertising is non-professional. There is also a widespread neglect of the importance of LLL and CVT. Finally, there is a certain short-sightedness among employers and trade unions.

Regarding the **good practices** situation in Romania it is complex: it is said that there are examples of 'good practices', but they are insufficiently disseminated. Also, there is a complex situation about the **contribution of different organizations**. There *are* institutions for quality assurance: for instance the providers of CVT have to be certified. Also, competences assessment centres have been established. The problem seems to be that these things do not work sufficiently. There is a need for a professionalization of the management. The same goes for evaluation methodology and practises: the (external) evaluators should be trained and certified. Also, the provision of LLL and CVT as such should be harmonised with European standards. Finally, it is a big problem that so far CVT certificates are not recognised by the national education system.

When it comes to **the role of the trainers**, the situation is that there is only to a limited extent CVT trainers available, who have specific adult education competences. There *are* valuable plans for a systematic training of CVT trainers, but they are not sufficiently implemented in the daily practise.

Regarding **vulnerable groups**, there are in Romania some formalised specific measurements (including CVT). Some good practises have been implemented by government in collaboration with the civil society.

**Distance and e-learning** activities are not very elaborated; most participants and other stakeholders prefer face-to-face learning. Of course the rate of internet access among the Romanian population is an important factor in this debate.

On this basis, **what policies could be recommended, and what ideas for further reflection could be put forward?** - from a Danish point of view. First of all, and rather generally: since the weak points of the system are so nicely pointed out in the national report it would be helpful to identify and elaborate, if possible, the specific reasons for the potentials

of the system not being realised. To gain knowledge about the concrete obstacles would be the first step to overcome these. For instance, why is it that the social partners have rejected the 'training fund', and why do they not make use of UIF?

It also seems unclear whether it is taken into consideration that it makes a significant difference if participants are meant to be 'sent' to LLL and CVT or to take a 'personal initiative' towards participation. One can send participants to educational programmes – but one cannot make sure that they will learn anything at all from this if they are not personally involved and motivated!

For further incentives for an increased participation rate also the following could be taken into consideration: the system could develop more target group sensitive programmes and finances – plus initiate a system of formal recognition and accreditation of prior learning (in-formal as well as non-formal).

With geography as one of the obstacles for participation the rate of internet access should be increased. For educational purposes the public authorities might support and subsidise computer and internet access, for instance in local community centres. This would allow experimental projects of 'blended learning' (combination of face-to-face and e-learning) to take place.

More generally two points:

- 1) In Denmark the state plays an important and productive role in CVT and LLL. The Danish state is 'lean', professionally organised and non-bureaucratic. This is important since 'state' could be seen as a provider of general infrastructure for economy (roads, ports, competences) and facilitator for development. Seen from a Scandinavian point of view: when it comes to education, including CVT and LLL, it must be a national task to bring about competitiveness of the country, because private enterprise has for good reasons only its own benefit in mind. Of course this relates to a different social history in Scandinavia: our long term democracy, the comprehensive social welfare state, high and efficient taxation, new public management, highly organised tripartite collaboration, labour market flexicurity. The concept mentioned cannot be directly

implemented in the Romanian context, but it may serve as inspiration.

- 2) Also, the ethos and practice of compulsory, primary/grammar school is of utmost importance for CVT and LLL. It should represent positive experiences for children and young people. It should base its activities on concepts of inclusive, participatory approaches. It should be based on respectful, equal and symmetric relations between children, parents, teachers and management. And it should reflect and implement modern learning theories and didactical anchoring. This is relevant because of the fact that many of the psychological barriers against participation of adults in CVT and LLL can be related to problematic experiences from compulsory school.

## **6. The European policy on Life Long Learning and The Lisbon goals**

### **6.1 The Lisbon goals**

The Treaty signed by the Heads of State or Government of the 27 Member States in Lisbon on 13th December 2007 provides the E.U. with modern institutions and optimised working methods to tackle both efficiently and effectively today's challenges in today's world. The European Council agreed on a new strategic goal in order to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy.

The Treaty of Lisbon confirms three principles of democratic governance in Europe:

- Democratic equality: the European institutions must give equal attention to all citizens.
- Representative democracy: a greater role for the European Parliament and greater involvement for national parliaments.
- Participatory democracy: new forms of interaction between citizens and the European institutions, like the citizens' initiative.

The treaty also clarifies the relations between the European Union and its member countries.

Through the Lisbon Treaty the EU policies have to boost employment, adequate social protection and the fight against social exclusion. More analytically, the new challenges are pin-pointed in the following policy areas as following:

#### **Climate change and the environment**

Although sustainable development and environmental protection have been included in existing treaties, the Treaty of Lisbon sets out clear definitions, reinforcing the EU's action in these fields.

#### **Energy**

The Treaty of Lisbon helps Europe secure its supply and will promote the use of sustainable and competitive resources. For the first time there will be a principle of solidarity, ensuring that if one country faces severe

difficulties in the supply of energy, other Member States will help keep the country supplied.

### **Civil protection**

The Treaty of Lisbon aims to facilitate the prevention and protection against natural and man made disasters within the EU. A new legal basis will allow EU countries' actions in this field to be supported and operational cooperation to be promoted.

### **Public health**

The Treaty provides for measures which have as their direct objective the protection of public health, including as regards tobacco and the abuse of alcohol. To step up patient protection, the E.U. will be able to set standards for medical products and devices.

### **Public services**

The Treaty of Lisbon recognises the role public services play in social and regional cohesion – transport, schooling, health care all keep us going. A special protocol is attached to the Treaty, which sets out the key ways to make services of general interest effective and relevant.

### **Regional policy**

The Treaty also consolidates economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Union; for the first time, the principle of territorial cohesion appears in the E.U. objectives. The Treaty of Lisbon strengthens the role of the regions and the new definition of the principle of subsidiarity – according to which the E.U. only acts where results can be better attained at EU level rather than national level – now refers to both local and regional levels.

### **Research**

The Treaty of Lisbon puts at the heart of its research policy the establishment of a European Research Area in which researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely.

### **Commercial policy**

The Treaty of Lisbon will extend the scope of Europe's commercial policy to include direct foreign investment. The tools of intellectual property: trade marks, designs, patents, copyright, are a driving force for innovation, growth and competitiveness.

## **Sport**

New provisions will enable the EU to support, coordinate and supplement the actions of Member States, promoting neutrality and transparency in sporting competitions and cooperation between sporting bodies. It will also protect the physical and moral integrity of sportsmen and women, with particular emphasis on the young.

## **Economy**

The euro area, comprising the countries having adopted the common currency, will also run more smoothly under the Treaty of Lisbon. The Commission will be able to issue a "direct" warning to Member States whose loose budgetary discipline risks jeopardising the proper functioning of the euro area.

## **Data protection**

The Treaty of Lisbon clearly states that everyone has the right to the protection of their personal data. This right is also enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

## **Tourism**

The Treaty of Lisbon creates a new legal basis entirely devoted to tourism, which should reinforce the EU as the foremost tourist destination of the world.

## **6.2 The Lisbon goals in relation to Lifelong Learning**

The Lisbon European Council in March 2000 set the European Union the strategic goal, reaffirmed at the Stockholm European Council in March 2001, of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world. Key elements of the strategy to achieve this were:

- The adaptation of education and training to offer tailored learning opportunities to individual citizens at all stages of their lives.
- The promotion of employability and social inclusion through investment in citizens' knowledge and competences.
- The creation of an information society for all.
- The fostering of mobility.

Lifelong learning has been the subject of policy discussion and development for many years now. Yet today there is a greater need than ever for citizens to acquire the knowledge and competences necessary both to tap into the benefits, and to meet the challenges of the knowledge-based society. This is why the Lisbon European Council confirmed lifelong learning as a basic component of the European social model.

More analytically, in the section of the Presidency Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council<sup>1</sup> “Modernising the European Social Model by Investing in People and Building an Active Welfare State” it is stated that:

1. A European framework should define the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning: IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills; a European diploma for basic IT skills, with decentralised certification procedures, should be established in order to promote digital literacy throughout the Union.
2. The Council and the Commission are invited to address four key areas among which: giving higher priority to lifelong learning as a basic component of the European social model, including by encouraging agreements between the social partners on innovation and lifelong learning; by exploiting the complementarity between lifelong learning and adaptability through flexible management of working time and job rotation; and by introducing a European award for particularly progressive firms. Progress towards these goals should be benchmarked.
3. The European Council makes a special appeal to companies' corporate sense of social responsibility regarding best practices on lifelong learning, work organisation, equal opportunities, social inclusion and sustainable development.

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<sup>1</sup> Presidency Conclusions, Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 March 2000.

### **6.3 The Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs (2008-2010) on Lifelong Learning**

In the Spring Council in 2005, Heads of State and Government renewed the Lisbon Strategy and placed its focus on growth and jobs. They organised the Lisbon Strategy around three year cycles, whilst strengthening ownership and accountability by clearly distinguishing between reforms which should be undertaken by Member States and those for which the Community should take the lead. As one of the instruments to implement the Strategy, the Council approved a set of integrated guidelines that are meant to guide Member States, as they implement national reforms, through their National Reform Programmes (NRP). The integrated guidelines expire at the end of the first three-year cycle, and therefore need to be renewed for the next cycle.

During the first cycle of the renewed Lisbon Strategy (2005-2008) Member States have stepped up the implementation of structural reforms, although the pace and intensity differs between them. The common objective during the next cycle (2008-2010) should be to use the Lisbon instruments, including the country-specific recommendations as adopted by Council in 2007 linked to the integrated guidelines, to full effect in order to speed up the effective delivery of outstanding reforms and are presented in two parts: a) The broad economic policy guidelines and b) The employment guidelines.

Within Guideline 17: "Implement employment policies aiming at achieving full employment, improving quality and productivity at work, and strengthening social and territorial cohesion" the quality of jobs, including pay and benefits, working conditions access to Lifelong Learning and career prospects, are crucial for a flexicurity approach, as are support and incentives stemming from social protection systems.

Within Guideline 20: "Improve matching of labour market needs." Lifelong Learning constitutes a way for workers in a rapidly changing economy in order to cope with new ways of working, including enhanced exploitation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and changes in their working status with associated risks of having to face temporary losses of income better accommodated through the provision of



appropriate modernised social protection. In addition, Lifelong Learning constitutes one of the four key components that should be taken into account in relation to flexicurity. More analytically, the four key components are the following:

- Flexible and reliable contractual arrangements through modern labour laws; collective agreements and work organisation.
- Comprehensive Lifelong Learning (LLL) strategies to ensure the continual adaptability and employability of workers, particularly the most vulnerable.
- Effective active labour market policies (ALMP) that help people cope with rapid change, reduce unemployment spells and ease transitions to new jobs.
- Modern social security systems that provide adequate income support, encourage employment and facilitate labour market mobility (this includes broad coverage of social protection provisions, unemployment benefits, pensions and healthcare, that help people combine work with private and family responsibilities such as childcare).

Within Guideline 22: “Ensure employment-friendly labour cost developments and wage-setting mechanisms”, Lifelong Learning and investment in human capital in general are necessary in order to enhance access to employment for men and women of all ages, raise productivity levels, innovation and quality at work. It is also pointed that in the effort for knowledge-based and service-based economies that require different skills from traditional industries, skills which also constantly need updating in the face of technological change and innovation all stakeholders should be mobilised to develop and foster a true culture of lifelong learning from the earliest age.

Finally, within Guideline 23: “Expand and improve investment in human capital”, it is stated that expand and improve investment in human capital should be achieved (along others) through efficient Lifelong Learning strategies open to all in schools, businesses, public authorities and households according to European agreements, including appropriate incentives and cost sharing mechanisms, with a view to enhancing participation in continuous and workplace training throughout the life-cycle, especially for the low-skilled and older workers. In this context, it is

also pointed that in order to ensure that supply meets demand in practice, lifelong learning systems must be affordable, accessible and responsive to changing needs.

#### **6.4 The European Policy on Lifelong Learning**

The role of the E.U. in education and training policies is a supporting one. The national governments of Member States are in charge of their education and training systems, but they cooperate within the E.U. framework in order to achieve common goals. The EU's strategy emphasises countries working together and learning from each other.

While vocational training had already been identified as an area of Community action in the Treaty of Rome in 1957, education was formally recognised as an area of European Union competency in the Maastricht Treaty establishing the European Community in 1992. The treaty states: "The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between member states and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the member states for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity".

The E.U. member states and the European Commission have in recent years strengthened their political cooperation through the Education and Training 2010 work programme. The programme integrates previous actions in the fields of education and training at the European level, including vocational education and training under the Copenhagen Process, and links up to the Bologna Process, which is crucial in the development of the European Higher Education Area. Its objectives and targets are the following:

- Improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems.
- Facilitating access to education and training systems.
- Opening up E.U. education and training systems to the wider world.

While there also five E.U. level benchmarks that are set for 2010:

- The average rate of early school leavers should be no more than 10%.

- The total number of graduates in maths, science and technology should increase by at least 15%, while the gender imbalance in these subjects should be reduced.
- 85% of 22 year olds should complete upper secondary education.
- The share of low achieving 15 year olds in reading should decrease by at least 20%.
- The average participation of working adult population in lifelong learning should rise by at least 12.5%.

What do we mean by Lifelong Learning?

“All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective”.<sup>2</sup>

## 6.5 The strategic challenges on Lifelong Learning

Following a wide consultation with Member States and other actors during 2008, the Communication “An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training” {Brussels, 16.12.2008, COM (2008) 865 final} suggests long-term strategic challenges to guide the policy cooperation for the period to 2020. The challenges reflect the contribution of education and training to the Lisbon Strategy and the renewed Social Agenda.

The four strategic challenges in the years to 2020 are set out in the Communication as following:

- Make lifelong learning and learner mobility a reality.
- Improve the quality and efficiency of provision and outcomes.
- Promote equity and active citizenship.
- Enhance innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

These challenges should be addressed in a joined-up policy across the systems as a whole (schools, higher education, vocational education and

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<sup>2</sup> Communication from the Commission, “Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality”. Brussels, 21.11.2001. COM(2001) 678 final.

training/VET and adult learning). Lifelong learning is therefore a fundamental perspective underpinning all the above challenges. While these strategic challenges should form the basis for policy cooperation for the period 2009-2020, more specific objectives should be established for priority attention in shorter term blocks. More analytically those are:

Strategic challenge: Make lifelong learning and learner mobility a reality.

Priority themes to be highlighted in 2009-10.

Member States and the Commission should give priority to achieving better implementation of:

- Lifelong learning strategies: Complete the process of implementation of national lifelong learning strategies, giving particular attention to the validation of non formal and informal learning and guidance.
- European Qualifications Framework: Link all national qualifications systems to the E.Q.F. by 2010 and support the use of an approach based on learning outcomes for standards and qualifications, assessment and validation procedures, credit transfer, curricula and quality assurance.

Member States and the Commission should focus on developing the policy cooperation on:

- Expanding learning mobility: Work together to eliminate barriers and expand opportunities for learning mobility within Europe and worldwide, both for higher and other levels of education, including new targets and financing instruments at the European and national levels.

Strategic challenge: Improve the quality and efficiency of provision and outcomes.

Priority themes to be highlighted in 2009-10.

Member States and the Commission should give priority to achieving better implementation in the following fields:

- Languages: To enable citizens to communicate in two languages in addition to their mother tongue, promote language teaching in VET and

for adult learners and give migrants the opportunity to learn the language of the host country.

- Professional development of teachers and trainers: Focus on key elements of teachers' initial training and on expanding the range and quality of the continuing professional development opportunities for teachers, trainers and staff involved, for example, in leadership or guidance activities.

- Governance and funding: Implement the modernisation agenda for higher education (including curricula), the quality assurance framework for VET15 and develop standards for adult learning professionals. Promote evidence-based policy and practice with a particular emphasis on establishing the case for sustainability of public and private investment.

Member States and the Commission should focus on developing the policy cooperation on:

- Basic skills in reading, mathematics and science: Set up a high-level group on literacy to investigate the problems behind the decline in reading performance among school pupils and make recommendations to improve literacy levels across the E.U.. Intensify existing cooperation to improve the take-up of maths and science at higher levels of education and training, and to strengthen science teaching. Member States should consider establishing national action plans for achievement in basic skills, including for adults.

- "New Skills for New Jobs": Ensure that the assessment of future skill requirements and the matching of labour market needs are fully taken on board in all education and training planning processes.

Strategic challenge: Promote equity and active citizenship.

Priority themes to be highlighted in 2009-10.

Member States and the Commission should give priority to achieving better results in:

- Early school leaving: Strengthen preventive approaches, build closer cooperation between general and vocational sectors and remove barriers for drop-outs to return to education and training.

Member States and the Commission should focus on developing the policy cooperation on:

- Pre-primary education: Promote generalised equitable access and reinforce quality of provision and teacher support.
- Migrants: Develop mutual learning on best practices for education of children from a migrant background.
- Learners with special needs: Promote personalised learning through timely support and well coordinated services. Integrate services within mainstream schooling and ensure pathways to further education and training.

Strategic challenge: Enhance innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

Priority themes to be highlighted in 2009-10.

Member States and the Commission should give priority to achieving better implementation of:

- Transversal key competences: Integrate transversal key competences fully into curricula, assessment and qualifications.

Member States and the Commission should focus on developing the policy cooperation on:

- Innovation-friendly institutions: Promote creativity and innovation through developing specific teaching and learning methods (including the use of new I.C.T. tools and teacher training).
- Partnership: Develop partnerships between education and training providers and businesses, research institutions, cultural actors and creative industries.

## 6.6 Investment in human capital

Investment in "human capital" is key to increasing opportunities for individuals and to tackling social exclusion. What is more, investing in technology is useless unless Europe also invests in people who can make that technology work for growth and jobs.

Lifelong learning means high quality initial education for all, from an early age and throughout lifetimes; reducing drop-out rates from schools; world-class higher education; vocational training systems that respond to students and employers' needs; real opportunities and incentives to learn new skills throughout careers, including for older workers. The Lisbon Growth and Strategy aims to make Europe's education and training systems into world leaders.

Member States committed themselves to establishing comprehensive lifelong learning strategies by 2006, to ensure everyone can update their skills throughout their lifetime. However, in its December 2007 Annual Progress Report on the Growth and Jobs Strategy, the European Commission identified lifelong learning as an area where progress at national level is limited. The E.U. has adopted for 2007-13 a new generation of European funding programmes for lifelong learning, worth €7 billion, which involves four sub-programmes focusing on different stages of education and training and continuing previous programmes:

1. **Comenius** for schools.

It should involve at least three million pupils in joint educational activities, over the period of the programme

2. **Erasmus** for higher education.

It should reach the total of three million individual participants in student mobility actions since the programme began.

3. **Leonardo da Vinci** for vocational education and training.

It should increase placements in enterprises to 80,000 per year by the end of the programme.

4. **Grundtvig** for adult education.

It should support the mobility of 7,000 individuals involved in adult education per year by 2013.

In this context, the E.U. has also launched the operation of **Eurydice** portal. As from 16 September 2008 the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) has taken over responsibility for the European-level activities of the network and a new European Eurydice unit has been established in the Agency. Eurydice provides a vast source of information, including detailed descriptions of how European education systems are organised and how they function and comparative studies covering various aspects of education systems, such as the funding of higher education, language teaching, the teaching profession and so on. This information is provided free of charge.

In addition, the E.U. has also launched the operation of **Ploteus** portal. Ploteus (a Portal on Learning Opportunities Throughout Europe) was set up in order to respond to the conclusions of the Lisbon and Stockholm European Councils (March 2000 and March 2001), which invited the European Commission and Member States to create a Europe-wide service providing information on jobs and learning opportunities. The purpose of Ploteus is to put into effect the right to freedom of movement for European citizens by providing the necessary information. Ploteus aims to facilitate navigation among existing information resources on learning opportunities. The work of identifying and classifying the information resources is carried out by the National Resources Centres for Vocational Guidance (Euroguidance) - a European network funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme and by national authorities.



## **7. European Employment Strategy (EES) and LLL – a critical assessment and some policy recommendations**

As pointed out above the Lisbon goals are about creating employment, economic reform and social cohesion. This should take place in a knowledge based economy, which should also be characterised by equality and social inclusion/protection, via a representative and participatory democracy. Fundamentally, it should aim at sustainability (of energy, climate, social cohesion etc.).

To offer some critical reflections and questions from a Danish viewpoint:

If we take Denmark as a case one might claim that publicly financed LLL does not create social inclusion and cohesion. It does exactly the opposite, it becomes a sophisticated tool for polarisation between social groups. How? If for instance 20% of the low-skilled people participate in public financed LLL and CVT per year, while 60% of those with good skills do, then we will of course see a general upheaval of the qualification structure. But we will also see a widening of the relative gap between social groups and generations. This might be the reason why some have talked about the 2/3-society. There seems to be a strong centrifugal power in advanced capitalism: more and more people are no longer capable of keeping a solid grab of the labour market. In Denmark approximately 30% of the population between 18-65 years are constantly excluded and on (lasting) social benefits: unemployment, pre-pension, sick leave schemes, etc.

One might also ask how above mentioned objects and goals relate to so far dominating neo-liberal growth strategies (deregulations of for instance transport patterns, CO2-emissions etc.)? The dynamics are that at the same time political forces in EU – parallel with deregulation concepts - want to regulate in a Keynesian way. For instance by creating new jobs in a sustainable economy: wind energy, recycling, household frugality = economy – in the classical Greek meaning of the word. *But*: all of this severely influence CVT and LLL – in terms of goals, aims, objectives,

curricula, organisation, financing, provision, governance, didactics, methodology, learning material, learning arenas etc. etc. It may also to some extent be incompatible and inconsistent with other policies and discourses (i.e. neo-liberal and market based concepts) of EES and LLL. For the regulated approach of course 'public service', i.e. the state, or other public authorities, and legislative regulations etc. should play a role in social/regional cohesion. This 'public service' for the 'common good' should be effective and relevant towards general interest. But this also implies, of course, that politicians, civil servants and public employees should think and act less bureaucratic, inefficient and selfish.

This also relates to CVT and LLL: we must critically ask ourselves, to what extent different stakeholders are in it for 'the general good'? Or only in it for 'the money'? The dilemma between these discourses is: market (orientation), including private providers, is said to be the most efficient and cost effective. On the other hand, governments have political goals, i.e. they intend to promote public service, sustainability etc. EU seems in general to be torn between two: neo-liberal market philosophy and Keynesian regulation philosophy – and this is also visible in policies and debates regarding EES and LLL.

To come up with **some recommendations**, we can begin by asking ourselves, how we can develop policies and practises, which are not either too cynical or too idealistic?

We have to have in mind the concept of 'subsidiarity' (at national, regional and local level). Things that can be fixed locally should not be regulated from far away (Brussels).

This means that we should ourselves develop ideas, policies and actions that are sensitive towards our own concrete socio-historical situation. National stakeholders, researchers and experts etc. should reflect these things – integrating, of course, inspiration from others outside.

This relates to a basic question we have to ask ourselves: who are the real experts in our contemporary hyper-complex world? There is a postmodern dictum: "If there is a centre it isn't inside and punctual, but outside and around". This means: 'truth' is no longer based on the sovereign overview and total insight of the one(s) centrally placed on top of the societal

pyramid or hierarchy. 'Truth' – or maybe better: 'plausibility' - is produced or constructed via communication between informed actors. This implies the development and implementation of participatory methods on all levels.

For this reason, increasingly, we have to rely on everyday/barefoot experts – instead of the so far expert-expert, who is/was someone who came from far away in a helicopter and gave clear answers to questions he didn't know. With the obvious result of inadequate generalisations, prejudices and reductions of complexity. This can be seen as the opposite of the concept of 'subsidiarity'.

The expert-experts can see many/most things, but not the details in the periphery very clearly. And the devil is in the detail, as we know. The barefoot experts do not see everything. But they see details close to them very clearly. Thus, to combine the two visions by means of participatory approaches, should give optimal results, i.e. plausible answers.

### **The Lisbon goals and LLL**

LLL is "a basic component of the European social model", it is said. This component is meant or supposed to create competitiveness, dynamics, employability, social inclusion, information (technology) and mobility. This is going to be done by offering education, training and "tailored learning opportunities to individual citizens" at all stages of their lives.

This is certainly a wonderful programme - but the literal implications are enormous. Imagine the resources it would take to tailor adult learning provision to all individuals in the 27, strongly diversified, EU member countries. Given the complexities put forward in previous chapters of this paper. One would like to see a detailed plan of implementation, financing etc. Until then the first reaction will be sceptical: is this really seriously meant – or rhetoric, just hot air?

It is also said in the Lisbon strategy that workers should take risks, invest in their own future, create new forms of employability via LLL and CVT, become entrepreneurs of their own lives etc.

But how does this match with traditional life styles and attitudes of the target group: low skilled and older (industrial) workers, cf. what has been analysed previously? One might say that their 'habitus' (their total socio-cultural profile, cf. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu) has been adequately and still is basically REACTIVE. Now policies are created around a(n illusion of a?) PROACTIVE attitude of the post-industrial worker. But we are to a large extent talking about the same persons/subjectivities! To explain this a bit: historical epochs seem to become shorter and shorter. We were hunters and gathers for hundreds of thousands of years; we were agriculturalists for 7-10.000 years; we were industrialists for 150-200 years; we are now in knowledge, information, post-industrial society. This means that many low skilled older workers have already lived and worked and developed identity during 3 different historical epochs: they grew up in the countryside, were farm-workers from when they were 12-14, then left for the big cities during the sixties, got jobs in industry and construction. Now they are supposed to adapt to globalised information and knowledge society - over night. They were brought up, trained, socialised to act reactively: the most important general and personal qualification they could develop was the ability and willingness to do what they were told to do. Now the demand for them is exactly the opposite: act pro-actively, do not expect to be told what to do, but tell yourself what is the right thing to do (take initiatives, act innovatively, run risks, change your attitude constantly etc.). From tomorrow you are an entrepreneur of your own life, no longer a subordinate. This is not easy.

**One can propose some means to increase participation – on a structural level:**

Expand collective agreements between social partners. Also the state could be integrated in tripartite agreements with shared responsibilities of financing etc. - An obstacle here is of course the actual and decreasing degree of organisation on most European labour markets – are the social partners' organisations strong enough to really play a significant role in EES, LLL and CVT?

Develop a modern and lean work organisation in the companies. This will activate existing, but hidden, qualifications - and reveal the need for new ones. – An obstacle here is the actual economic structure with the many SMEs that cannot be expected to lead this step forward.

Initiate active labour market policies: job-rotation schemes, paid educational leave, training of unemployed etc. – The question is how widespread between the member states the role and resources of (welfare) state is? What level of taxation is possible? To what degree do people have confidence in the state and the politicians? Etc.?

Given the modern globalised economy and international division of labour it is generally accepted that technological change and innovation leads to a constant need for updating of skills. "All stakeholders should mobilise and foster a true culture of life long learning from the earliest age", it is stated in the Lisbon Paper. – The question is, how realistic this is in the present context of (all of) the member states. The differentiated national challenges should be reflected and met in a sophisticated and delicate way.

The EU Commission proposes LLL investments and activities "especially for the low skilled and older workers". – The obstacle here is evidence that this is the toughest challenge of all, cf. previously and unanimous statistics, surveys etc.

In this regard EU proposes as a LLL policy that countries should work together and learn from each other. – The problem seems to be that so far none have sufficiently solved the fundamental problems mentioned above.

**The strategy for 2010** contains the following elements:

- National qualifications should be linked to European Qualification Framework (EQF)
- Qualifications and skills should be standardised
- Assessment and validation procedures should be reinforced and implemented
- Credit transfer possibilities should be facilitated, nationally as well as internationally

- Curricula- and quality assurance should be improved
- Learning mobility should be expanded

The more specific **priorities 2009-2010** are the following:

- Citizens should improve their foreign language skills: they should master minimum two foreign languages on level of communication.
- Teachers and trainers should be professionalised: they should improve their initial training, and include leadership and guidance skills in their qualification profile.
- Governance and funding should be improved: evidence based measurements and sustainability of investments should be implemented.
- Citizens' basic skills on all (age) levels should be improved: literacy, numeracy and (natural) sciences – cf. PISA surveys, Asian positions etc.
- Skills requirements should be matched with future labour market needs.
- Drop outs should be prevented. General and vocational sectors should be combined. Second chancers' access to education and training should be improved.
- Pre-primary education should be strengthened. Target group sensitive initiatives should be improved – and they should be aimed at migrants, learners with special needs etc.
- Innovation-friendly institutions should be developed – for instance when it comes to ICT and teacher training.
- Partnerships should be established - between providers, businesses, research, cultural actors and creative industries, for instance.

This message to the member countries from the European politicians could be narrowed down to: *invest in human capital!* Unfortunately, the Lisbon Paper also has to admit that "Progress at national level is limited" (based on a report from December 2007). – It seems essential to identify the concrete reasons for these difficulties, specifically towards each national context. This is the only way to move forward.

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